

Le Petit Prince and the Variation Across German Translations from a Linguistic Perspective

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Article information	Abstract
Article history: Received: 31 Aug 2025 Last revised: 6 Apr 2026 Accepted: 10 Apr 2026 Available online: 21 Apr 2026 Keywords: Le petit prince German translation Linguistic analysis	Saint-Exupéry's <i>Le petit prince</i> is a literary classic that has been read worldwide, across generations, and languages. Different translations in the same language are widely available, providing numerous aspects to be explored. Its German translations are of particular interest because of the active movement of retranslating this work. This research thus has two main objectives: 1) to provide an overview of key similarities and differences of various German translations in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and structure; and 2) to identify important characteristics of German through different translations with reflections from comparisons among the translations themselves and between them and the original text. A self-compiled parallel corpus of the original French text and six German versions was examined qualitatively using a traditional linguistic framework. In terms of lexical variations, key words were mostly translated with the same German equivalents; however, variation between two and three synonyms is common. Regarding the grammatical categories, variations are found in numbers, tenses, moods, voices, and pronouns. In terms of syntactic structure, three important features can be identified: the variation between full verbs and constructions with a nominal or a prepositional phrase, the variation of phrase types, and word order variation. Important characteristics of German were also reflected in the length difference, variation of addition and omission, and topicalization. All these aspects contribute to the variation across translations, which goes partially back to German's richness in forms and structures rather than the concept of retranslation motivated by the shifts in readership. The research findings may be useful for teaching German as a foreign language.

INTRODUCTION

Since its first publication in 1943, the French literary work *Le petit prince* (*The Little Prince*) has become a timeless masterpiece read worldwide across generations. It is the most translated book in the world (Guinness World Record, 2025) and Antoine Saint-Exupéry has been documented as the most translated author, with his literary piece translated in over 382 languages and dialects. The number of target languages is even larger according to the documentation of the Jean Marc Probst Foundation's "Petit Prince Collection" that began in 1980 and now comprises

7,570 distinct editions in 627 different languages and dialects (Petit Prince Collection, n.d.). Apart from its large number of translations, the book has become an object of study in different aspects and in several fields of study, including language and literary studies, philosophy, and anthropology, and has been presented in various formats, e.g., graphic novel, comic, film, etc. In terms of linguistics and translation studies, three directions of research are found widely:

1. projects aiming at compiling and testing a *Le petit prince* corpus with the original text and its various translations for linguistic studies (e.g., Gamermann et al., 2017; Tamura 2019);
2. research focusing on using *Le petit prince* and its translation in a specific target language as a corpus to explore individual linguistic research questions and/or translation techniques (e.g., Korcz & Szymańska, 2023; Nujić, 2024; Sakulpimolrat, 2019; Tamura, 2009); and
3. studies focusing on comparing different translations or translation genres within the same target language (e.g., Roßmann, 2019; Rongtheera & Supanfai, 2024).

Although the German translations of this literary work have also been repeatedly studied in some of the above-mentioned studies, only a few specific linguistic elements have been explored before, such as subjunctive moods (Tamura 2009), the use of the pronoun *es* ('it') (Korcz & Szymańska, 2023), and verb valency (Nujić, 2024). None of these studies, however, has compared different German versions to give a linguistic overview of these translations.

A comparative analysis focusing on more than one specific linguistic aspect should provide a clearer picture in identifying research areas for further exploration when using the German translations of this literary piece as a corpus. The use of translations, primarily of literary works, typically provides an opportunity for a contrastive analysis between the source and the target language (Lüger, 2024). The exploration of various translations of one single target language among themselves in comparison to the source language would not only shed light on translation techniques, but could also be combined with research on translation variation at the same time. This should highlight the characteristics of the analyzed target language even more clearly. Besides, it could also contribute to the discussion on the Retranslation Hypothesis of Berman (1990, as cited in Sanatifar & Etemadi, 2021) who stated that earlier translations tended to follow more closely the norms of the target language and culture, while the later ones are closer to the source text and culture. With this theoretical background, the present study aims to fill this research gap with its two main objectives:

- 1) to provide an overview of key similarities and differences of various German translations in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and structure, or lexical, grammatical, and syntactic features; and
- 2) to identify important characteristics of German through different translations with reflections from comparisons among the translations themselves and between them and the original text.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review in this section focuses on two main directions: the analysis of various target languages of *Le petit prince* focusing on different translation dimensions, and prior research using the German translations of this book as a corpus.

Translation dimensions of *Le petit prince* in other languages

Among the myriad of translation studies involving *Le petit prince*, Sakulpimolrat's (2019) study is noteworthy as it utilized a descriptive qualitative method to describe the translation techniques of the directive speech acts in *The Little Prince* novel, in turn evaluating the quality of its Indonesian translation based on accuracy, acceptability, and readability. The data was collected through a document analysis and focus group discussions. A total of 14 techniques were identified in the translation of directive speech acts: established equivalence, variation, modulation, implication, explication, discursive creation, transposition, paraphrase, compensation, addition, reduction, borrowing, literal translation, and generalization. It was found that the technique of establishing equivalence contributed to the quality of the translation, while discursive creation and reduction resulted in a less accurate and imperfect version of the translation.

Sanatifa and Etemadi's (2021) study is another critical study that aimed to revisit the Retranslation Hypothesis by examining the Persian re-translations of *The Little Prince*. The results of the study were largely in line with the hypothesis and proved that earlier translations followed more closely the norms of the target language and culture, i.e., later translations were seen as closer to the source text and culture.

Armyla and Kuncara (2022) also examined how interrogative utterances in *The Little Prince* were translated from English into Indonesian, focusing on 97 questions from the source text. Twelve translation techniques were identified. Literal translation was the dominant strategy, followed by reduction, while other strategies, such as modulation, transposition, and establishing, were rarely used.

Finally, Rongtheera and Supanai (2024) investigated the style of two translators who translated *Le petit prince* from French into English using a corpus-based method to discuss the differences reflected by keyword analysis and found that Irene Testot-Ferry's translation was more oriented towards the source text compared to T.V.F. Cuffe whose translation relied more on independent word selection.

Past studies using German translations of *Le petit prince*

Aside from studies dealing with translation in different languages, as mentioned above, the German translations of this book were also widely used as a corpus to analyze grammatical aspects in different translated versions. However, comparisons were not made between different translations in Standard German, but sometimes in another language or dialect. For example, Tamura (2009) examined the use of the subjunctive mood in the Luxembourgish

translation of *Le petit prince* compared to the original French and the German version. It was found that the Luxembourgish version retained many functions of the German *Konjunktiv* (subjunctive), despite lacking certain forms and a variation of the use of the subjunctive mood among the analyzed versions. The French subjunctive mood was not always translated with the equivalent subjunctive forms in Luxembourgish and German, and was often translated using the indicative mood instead. Some expressions were also too complex to be transferred directly into the target language. Moreover, the spectrum of the functions of the subjunctive mood was not the same in these three involved languages, and it was clear that the Luxembourgish subjunctive mood focused mainly on expressing the content of knowledge.

Roßmann's (2019) comparison of selected passages from the picture book, *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and the graphic novel, *Der kleine Prinz (The Little Prince)* by Joann Sfar focused on how both use verbal and visual modes to tell the story. The result showed that both formats were multimodal while exhibiting notable similarities and differences in how the images and text interacted. Thus, translating such works required specialized multimodal competence.

While Korcz and Szymańska (2023) analyzed the syntactic functions of the German pronouns ('it') and found that it was most frequently used as a subject, Fejkiel et al. (2023) analyzed 69 reflexive verbs found in the German version of *Le petit prince* in terms of their characteristics and usage. They concluded that the true reflexive verbs formed a small group of five examples: *sich beeilen* ('to hurry'), *sich ereignen* ('to happen'), *sich erkundigen* (to inquire), *sich umschauen* ('to look around'), and *sich verirren* ('to get lost'), while no reciprocal verb was identified. Nujić's (2024) study aimed to find out whether there were any similarities, connections and whether the verb valency can be logically associated in the cognitive processes. The results of this analysis show that in most cases, the *complément d'objet direct* corresponded to the accusative object and the *complément d'objet indirect* with a preposition corresponded to the dative object in German.

German translations were also analyzed by Tamura (2019) in comparison to other target languages. In the study, the use of the perceptive construction and the transitive construction with an inanimate subject—considered features of the DO-languages, i.e., agent-oriented languages—were explored, between the original French version of *The Little Prince* and its respective translations in English, German, Dutch, Portuguese, Russian, Luxembourgish, and Japanese. It was found that Japanese translations as a whole and the Russian translation avoided the features of DO-type expressions, while the Luxembourgish translation, being different from other Western European languages, also avoided the features of DO-type expressions. The German translation of *Le petit prince* was also included in a large project by the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences in Leipzig, as presented by Stehwen et al. (2020). The project dealt with the compiling of the *Le Petit Prince Corpus* (LPPC) consisting of 26 languages for experimental research in cross-linguistic (computational) psycho- and neuro-linguistics. The corpus has since served as a pivotal foundation for future research on the neural basis of language processing across typologically diverse languages, supporting innovative psycho- and neuro-linguistic investigations.

Based on the above literature review, there was still a research gap in the linguistic comparison of different German translations of *Le petit prince* (specifically where more than two versions are compared) focusing on a variety of aspects at the same time. This present study thus aimed to find key characteristics in a broader sense that can be made useful for informing descriptions of the German language for teaching and translating purposes.

CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY

According to the documentation on the website of Jean Marc Probst Foundation's "Petit Prince Collection", there are at least 171 books of *Le petit prince* in German with 18 different translators in total (Petit Prince Collection, n.d.).

For the analysis of this study, a self-compiled parallel corpus was used. Included in the corpus were the original French version and six selected German versions, which were chosen based on the following criteria:

1. The first translators, Grete and Josef Leitgeb, whose translation has been published continually since their first version in 1950, and thus the best-known German and most cited version, was chosen as the most frequently published German translation. Grete and Josef Leitgeb's translation had been the only German version until 2014, 70 years after the death of Saint-Exupéry, when the copyright of the original had expired and the book was then retranslated into German by other translators and published by different publishers.
2. Since 2015 was the year of a great number of different German translations, five other translators whose first publications in this year were republished at least twice were chosen as they were considered to be the most popular versions among the German-speaking audience and easily accessible. The number of translations that passed this criterion was under ten, five was thus a proper and manageable number, considering the qualitative approach of this research.

The corpus thus consisted of versions translated from French into German by Grete and Josef Leitgeb (1950/2005)¹, Hans Magnus Enzenberger (2015/2023), Peter Stamm (2015), Hannelore Eisenhofer (2015/2024), Walter Sauer (2015/2019), and Ulrich Bossier (2015/2023). While the French original version was taken from the free e-book website (Saint-Exupéry, 1943), all the German translations comprise books owned by the author. Both the original and the translations were imported or typed into the Word program and were counted before the data were transferred into an Excel sheet for analytical purposes.

It is to be noted that even though a parallel corpus was compiled for the present study, the analysis did not follow the methodology typically used in corpus linguistics studies. Instead, it employed a descriptive method and traditional linguistic frameworks to examine lexical, grammatical, and structural variation among the translations themselves and between the

¹ The translation by Grete and Josef Leitgeb was first published in 1950. For this study, all the editions analyzed and cited refer to those owned by the author.

source and its translations. The analysis focused on a linguistic reflection referring to the ability to ponder and examine the highlights of these variations in the languages used. For this reason, quantitative data will be presented at the minimal level, i.e., only to show a trend that can support the overall analysis, while both descriptive results and interpretative insights were interwoven in the analysis.

French and German, the source and target languages of the present study respectively, share many similarities, both in terms of their language system (as inflecting languages with SVO typological word order) and orthography. Therefore, the data were divided into individual constructions ranging from one word with sentence-equivalent elements (such as answering particles, interjections, or ellipsis constructions) to consecutive utterances combined with several commas. A new construction was separately counted only after a period (.), question mark (?), exclamation mark (!), and colon (:) preceding a statement which is a complete sentence, but never after or before a comma (,). For example, *Voilà la copie du dessin* is a token, – *Ce n'est pas une chose. Ça vole. C'est un avion. C'est mon avion* are counted as 4 tokens, while the case of *Moi, répondit le petit prince, je n'aime pas condamner à mort, et je crois bien que je m'en vais*, is considered one single construction/token. The corpus is thus composed of 11,844 constructions/tokens coded in numbers and abbreviations, beginning with either O (Original; original) referring to the original French and Ü (*Übersetzung*; translation) referring to the German translation, followed by the initials of the translators (in case of the German translation) and the number of that specific token, e.g., O-xxx; Ü_GL & JL-xxx; Ü_HME-xxx, Ü_PS-xxx, Ü_HE-xxx, Ü_WS-xxx, and UB-xxx respectively. Table 1 below shows the size of the corpus and the number of analyzed tokens. The codes will always be provided instead of page numbers when examples from the corpus are analyzed to answer the research questions related to the present study's objectives.

Table 1
Details about the analyzed corpus

Author/Translator	Word count	Analyzed tokens	Remarks
Antoine Saint-Exupéry (O)	14,784	1,700 ²	
Grete and Josef Leitgeb (Ü_GL & JL)	14,633	1,698	This is the first German-translated version, and the translators/publisher had been the only copyright holders for almost 50 years before other translations were allowed.
Hans Magnus Enzenberger (Ü_HME)	15,487	1,676	While the original and all other German translations begin with the dedication À LÉON WERTH (<i>Für Léon Werth</i> ; 'For Léon Werth'), Enzenberger puts this text at the end after the story.
Peter Stamm (Ü_PS)	14,170	1,690	
Hannelore Eisenhofer (Ü_HE)	14,382	1,688	
Walter Sauer (Ü_WS)	14,939	1,699	
Ulrich Bossier (Ü_UB)	14,869	1,694	
Total	103,264	11,844	

² It is noted that the number of each token is based on the original text, the maximum number is 1700. Added words or utterances in the translations are not counted separately, but merged into other existing ones. On the contrary, some tokens in the original were omitted, resulting in a smaller number of analyzed tokens across all of the translated versions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Variations across various German translations

Lexical variation

Regarding the lexical aspect, three main phenomena were found: (i) all six translations used the same vocabulary; (ii) there were variations with two to three forms of vocabulary; and (iii) more than four different words appeared as equivalents.

Words that appeared with no variation are mostly keywords or important figures in the story. They were also used repeatedly throughout the story. Unlike some translations where book titles may change during the retranslation process, e.g., Thai translations of *Animal Farm* (Thaweekittikul, 2018), the German title *Le petit prince* was always maintained as *Der kleine Prinz*. In addition, there were no other lexical titles used instead of this to represent the main character, except for the use of a pronoun to refer to the whole nominal phrase. Other examples are *Elefant* ('*éléphant*; elephant'), *Fuchs* ('*renard*; fox'), *Bewunderer* ('*admirateur*; admirer'), *Stern* ('*étoile*; star'), *Brunnen* ('*puits*; well'), etc. However, not only nominal elements were found to be translated with the same words, but also other parts of speech, such as verbs and adjectives. Some lexical elements were found in all six translations, e.g., *gähnen* (*bâillement*; yawn) or *vernünftig* (*raisonnable*; reasonable). However, it is to be noted that even though the same lexical units were chosen, the translations may vary through the related grammatical morphemes. For example, the French verb with the meaning 'to digest' (*digérer*) with the German equivalent verb *verdauen* were translated as *verdaut* (singular present) in a subordinated clause or as an infinitive *zu verdauen* ('to digest') after the expression *dabei sein* (to be going to), as shown in Example (1) below:

- (1) *Il représentait un serpent boa qui digérait un éléphant.*
(‘It depicted a boa constrictor that digested an elephant’, O-28)
Sie stellte eine Riesenschlange dar, die einen Elefanten verdaut.
(‘It depicted a giant snake that digests an elephant’, Ü_GL & JL-28; Ü_HME-28)
Sondern eine Boa gezeichnet, die einen Elefanten verdaut.
(‘But a boa drawn that digests an elephant’, Ü_UB-28)
...sie zeigte eine Boa, die einen Elefanten verdaute.
(‘it showed a giant snake that digested an elephant’, Ü_PS-28)
...sondern eine Riesenschlange, die gerade dabei ist, einen Elefanten zu verdauen.
(‘but a giant snake that is currently in the process of going to digest’, Ü_HME-28)
Da war eine Boa drauf, die dabei war, einen Elefanten zu verdauen
(‘There was a boa on it, that was in the process of going to digest’, Ü_WS-28)

It is noteworthy that there are also cases where five translations used the same vocabulary, but only one version used a different word. This can be interpreted as the translator’s own individual style. However, two lexical units are notable since they also have an important role in the story, i.e., *serpent* (‘snake’) and *grande personne*. Only Enzenberger (2023) used the word *Natter* (‘viper’) to translate this, while the other five translators used the word *Schlange*

(‘snake’). In the latter case, only Grete and Josef Leitgeb (2005) mostly used the expression *große Leute* (‘big people’) to translate the French terms *grande personne*, while others preferred the more frequent German term *Erwachsene* (‘grown-up’).

The most commonly found phenomenon of lexical diversity in translations was the use of different words with similar meaning, resulting in two or three words appearing across the six translated versions, e.g., the translation of *stupéfait* (‘amazed’, O-112) as *erstaunt* (3 times), *verblüfft* (twice) and *überrascht* (once), which are all synonyms in German. Another phenomenon shows the lexical variation between actual German words and internationalisms, e.g., *télescope* (‘telescope’, O-178), was translated as both *Teleskop* and *Fernrohr*, or *absurd* (‘absurd’, O-1338) was translated as both *absurd* and *sinnlos*.

The last group of lexical variations is the phenomenon where almost every translation used at least four different forms to translate the same element in the original. This category was the least common, but can still be found, for example, in the sentence *Cette eau était bien autre chose qu’un aliment* (‘This water was much more than food’, O-1408), where the underlined noun phrase was translated differently as *ein Trunk* (‘a drink’, Ü_GL & JL-1408), *Wasser* (‘water’, Ü_HME-1408), *ein Getränk* (‘a drink’, Ü_PS-1408), *ein Labsal* (‘refreshment’, Ü_HE-1408), *ein gewöhnliches Nahrungsmittel* (‘common food’, Ü_WS-1408), and *schlichte Nahrung* (‘simple food’, Ü_UB-1408). Remarkably, while the first three variants in German mean ‘a drink’, ‘water’ or ‘refreshment’, the last two variants show the literal translation of *aliment* as ‘food’. Overall, lexical variation across the translation in the corpus reflected common synonyms in German as standard variation, while in only some exceptional cases, a unique word choice was found.

Grammatical variations across translations

Since vocabulary variation in different German translations occurs not only among the same parts of speech, empirical observations can shed light on further typological reflections in terms of grammar, especially the grammatical categories of German, where the connection between the morphology and syntax of this language is built. Out of all the three nominal categories (gender, number, case) and the five verbal categories (person, number, tense, mood, voice), the analysis of the variation in grammatical categories in the German translations focused only on four prominent categories that were found to differ among the analyzed translations of the same original text, namely, number, tense, mood and voice. The use of pronouns which relates to the verbal categories, person and number, was also considered. These particular aspects cover all relevant categories, while the nominal categories, gender and case, cannot be directly interpreted as translation variation, since the gender is fixed to each noun in German, and case is related to the valency of the verbs as a result of lexical variation.

The use of singular vs. plural form

There are two grammatical numbers in French and German, singular and plural; however, expressing numbers in nouns showed variation among the German translations and thus, similarities as well as differences from the original French text, as shown in Example (2) below:

(2) *c'est le plus joli* ! ('It's the prettiest', O-954)

Das ist doch das Schönste! ('That is the most beautiful (thing)', Ü_HE-954)

Sie ist das Schönste auf meinem Planeten!

('She is the most beautiful (thing) on my planet', Ü_PS-954)

Sie sind das Schönste!" ('They are the most beautiful (thing)', Ü_GL & JL-954)

Die sind doch das Schönste ('Those are the most beautiful (thing)', Ü_UB-954)

Die sind doch am schönsten!" ('Those are yet the most beautiful', Ü_WS-954)

Blumen sind doch am schönsten! ('Flowers are yet the most beautiful', Ü_HME-954)

This sentence refers to 'the flower' as a category (as reaction to the geographer's information that the flower was not documented) and was thus expressed with a singular form in the original version. However, in the German translation, both singular and plural forms were used to refer to either *die Blume* ('the flower') as a category or the plural form *Blumen* ('flowers'). For both cases, the same form, i.e., *sie* ('she', 'they') was used as pronominal reference, but with distinction in verb conjugation of the copular verb *sein* ('be') to show the number, i.e., either *ist* (singular) or *sind* (plural).

The use of different tenses

Most of the translations tended to use the same tense to translate the same context, i.e., using the *Präteritum* (past) tense as the main tense to tell the story as often found in German literature as it is a tense for storytelling. However, there are many situations where the *Perfekt* (present perfect)³ was also used in variation. Another tense referring to time in the past is the *Plusquamperfekt* (past perfect), which is usually used to clearly convey something happening before the past event mentioned earlier. The *Präsens* (present) tense is used in most conversational sentences, while the tense *Futur I* (future) is often seen as a category overlapping between tense and mood since it indicates future events and is often used in making promises. In the corpus, both *Präsens* and *Futur I* also frequently appeared in direct speeches in the story of *Le petit prince*. Although French also has tense as a verbal category, its number and usage are quite different in German, so no 1:1 translation can be expected. At the same time, even across the six German translations, a variety of tenses for the same original utterances was found, as shown in Example (3) below, which was expressed in the original as a past event meaning, 'I knew a planet, inhabited by a lazy person'. In all of the German translations, a relative clause was used, facilitating the use of two different tenses in the main and subordinated clauses.

(3) *J'ai connu une planète, habitée par un paresseux.*

('I knew a planet, inhabited by a lazy person', O-292) [*passé composé*]

Ich kannte einen Planeten, auf dem ein Faulpelz wohnte.

('I knew a planet on which a lazybones lived', Ü_PS-292) [past + past]

Ich kannte einen Planeten, der von einem Faulenzer bewohnt wurde.

('I knew a planet that was inhabited by a lazybones', Ü_HE-292) [past + past]

Ich kannte einmal einen Planeten, auf dem ein Faulenzer wohnte.

('I once knew a planet on which a lazybones lived', Ü_WS-292) [past + past]

³ All the grammatical terms in German mentioned in this article are translated into English along with the common terms used in linguistic studies and German grammar. Their forms and functions do not need to be the same as in French or in English. The English terms used here refer to Fagan (2009).

Ich habe einen Planeten gekannt, den ein Faulpelz bewohnte.

('I have known a planet, (on) which a lazybones inhabited', Ü_GL & JL-292) [present perfect + past]

Ich habe einmal einen Planeten gekannt, den bewohnte ein Faulpelz.

('I have once known a planet, (on) that a lazybones inhabited', Ü_UB-292) [present perfect + past]

Ich kenne einen Planeten, auf dem ein Faulpelz haust.

('I know a planet on which a lazybones houses', Ü_HME-292) [present + present]

While the form and the use of the French *passé composé* is like the German *Perfekt* (present perfect) with the use of auxiliary verb *avoir* and *haben/sein* (have/be) respectively, the German *Präteritum* (past) can be compared to the *passé simple* in French, since both are used more frequently in literature and storytelling. However, both tenses are equivalent to the English past simple tense and, remarkably, the German translations show variation between these two tenses. In the translation by Hans Magnus Enzenberger (2023), who shows a unique translation style throughout the book, the variation of tense use was even more noticeable, since he used the *Präsens* (present) in this context where the original sentence was expressed in past tense.

Variation of mood

Propositions can be expressed in German in three different moods: *Indikativ* (indicative – expresses reality, facts, or certainties of a proposition), *Imperativ* (imperative – gives commands or requests) and *Konjunktiv*⁴ (subjunctive – expresses wishes, suggestions, demands, hypothetical situations, or counterfactual propositions).

The use of the same mood in all of the analyzed translations is common, e.g., *Imperativ* was used to express a command, while *Konjunktiv II* was used to express unreal propositions. However, moods were also found to be translated differently in the same context, e.g., *Indikativ* vs. *Imperativ* or *Indikativ* vs. *Konjunktiv*. This means the moods in the translations were not always the same as in the French original text. Moreover, the modality can be expressed by other mechanisms. For example, the use of the modal verb *müssen* ('must') in *Indikativ* or the use of the tense *Futur I*⁵ was also possible for expressing an order instead of the imperative mood. This possibility also exists in French by using *futur proche* (*aller* + infinitive, 'be going to') to express something which is going to happen in a short time and can also be interpreted as a request or command. This use of *future proche* is often found when speaking with children, while commands in an official context can be expressed only through future simple, not with this tense.

⁴ The subjunctive in German is divided according to its form into two categories: *Konjunktiv I* (subjunctive 1) and *Konjunktiv II* (subjunctive 2). While *Konjunktiv I* mainly handles direct speech in formal contact, *Konjunktiv II* covers hypothetical propositions or expresses irreality.

⁵ German differentiates between *Futur I* (future, formed with the auxiliary *werden* ('become') and an infinitive) and *Futur II* (future perfect, i.e., the infinitive is replaced by the infinitive perfect (infinitive of the auxiliary *haben* ('have') or *sein* ('be') and the past participle of the main verb).

The variation of moods found in the German translations can thus be considered as grammatical variation. Example (4) below shows the variation of translations, ranging from faithful to the mood in the source language to completely deviant.

(4) *Tu vas me décrire ta planète !*

(‘You are going to describe your planet to me’, O-939) [indicative]

Du wirst mir deinen Planeten beschreiben!

(‘You will describe me your planet’, Ü_GL & JL-937; Ü_PS-937; Ü_HE-939) [indicative]

Du musst mir deinen Planeten beschreiben!

(‘You must describe me your planet’, Ü_HME-937; Ü_WS-939) [indicative]

Beschreib mir deinen Planeten!’ (‘Describe me your planet’, Ü_UB-939) [imperative]

The first variant showed the future form and the indicative mood as in the original. The second version, also in the indicative mood, emphasized the command tone with the modal verb *müssen* (‘must’). In the following context, the command was expressed even more directly through the use of the imperative mood. Example (5) below also shows the diversity of moods, but with even more variation.

(5) *Vous leur conseillerez donc de faire le calcul.*

(‘You will advise them therefore to do the calculation’, O-1008) [indicative]

Ihr müsst ihnen dennoch den Rat geben, es auszurechnen.

(‘You must still give them and advice to calculate it’, Ü_HE-1008) [indicative]

Dann müsst ihr ihnen raten, selbst einmal zusammenzurechnen.

(‘Then, you must advise them to once add it up themselves’, Ü_WS-1008) [indicative]

Gebt ihnen also den Rat sich es auszurechnen.

(‘So, give them the advice to add it up’, Ü_GL & JL-1008) [imperative]

Gebt ihnen also den Rat nachzurechnen.

(‘So, give them the advice to recalculate’, Ü_UB-1008) [imperative]

Ratet ihnen also, selbst die Rechnung zu machen.

(‘So, advise them to do the calculation themselves’, Ü_PS-1008) [imperative]

Man sollte ihnen also dazu raten, die Sache seither auszurechnen.

(‘One should thus advise them to calculate the matter since then’, Ü_HME-1008) [subjunctive]

While the original sentence was expressed in indicative with the verb in *futur simple* (simple future tense), comparable with the *Futur I* (future 1) in German to express an event that will happen in the future to imply an indirect command, the first two translations used the tense *Präsens* (present) and the modal verb *müssen* (‘must’) in indicative equivalently. The direct command was expressed through the imperative mood in the following three translated versions. The proposition varied again in the last sentence since another subject was introduced, i.e., *man* (one). The use of the subjunctive mood here shows quite a different interpretation, since no command was expressed but rather a suggestion with a distant point of view by stating that ‘So one should advise them to calculate the matter since then’ instead of the literal translation ‘So you will advise them to do the calculation’.

Expressions in different voices

Both French and German have two main grammatical voices, active and passive, to express whether the subject acts (agent/doer) or the subject receives the action (patient/receiver). Although there are constructions which can express similar meanings such as the passive voice and those that imply the third voice, the so-called middle voice, in both languages (e.g., the more explicit category *voix pronominale* and the *Medium* (the Middle) in German, which is not always described in standard German grammar), the analysis in this research focused only on the two main voices denoting agent vs. patient⁶. Since the present research does not aim to categorize voices with a quantitative approach, only explicit active and passive constructions were analyzed. It was found that all six analyzed translations do not always show the same voice as in the original, causing a variation between active and passive voices in the same context, as shown in Example (6).

- (6) *Elle a bien besoin d'être consolée.* ('She really needs to be consoled', O-9) [passive]
Er hat es nötig, getröstet zu werden. ('He needs to be consoled', Ü_PS-9) [passive]
Er muss getröstet werden. ('He must be consoled', Ü_HE-9) [passive]
Also soll man alles tun, um ihn zu trösten.
 ('So one should do everything to console him', Ü_HME-9) [active]
Er braucht sehr notwendig einen Trost. ('He really needs consolation', Ü_GL&JL-9) [active]
Er kann Trost brauchen. ('He may need consolation', Ü_WS-9) [active]
Da braucht er etwas, das ihn aufmuntert ('He needs something to cheer him up', Ü_UB-9) [active]

It is also notable that the diathesis, which is grammatically expressed by voice, can be observed in the lexical change, even when the voice itself is not affected, especially for intransitive verbs that cannot be passivized. For example, the utterance *je possède les étoiles* ... ('I own the stars', O-778,) was translated with the verb *besitzen* ('own') (Ü_GL&JL-778; Ü_HE-778; Ü_WS-778; Ü_UB-778) or *gehören* ('belong to') (Ü_HME-778; Ü_PS-778) with the different subjects *ich* ('I') and *die Sterne* ('the stars') respectively. Essentially, the variation of voices in the analyzed translation also showed a transition to variation in terms of structure.

The Use of different pronouns

German and French share both similarities and differences in the pronominal system. The following analysis focuses only on certain interesting phenomena found in the German translations. Variation was identified in the use of second person pronouns (fr. *tu, vous*; ger. *du, ihr, Sie*; engl. *you*) as well as in the use of indefinite and impersonal pronouns (fr. *on, il*; ger. *man, es*; engl. *one, it*).

While the second person singular pronoun *tu* was translated as *du* throughout the book, variation occurred in the translation of the second person plural form *vous*. Since both *ihr* and

⁶ A more detailed categorization of French voices into *voix passive*, *active*, *pronominale* and *impersonnelle* can be found, i.e., Charaudeau (1992). However, from a typological perspective, both languages do not serve as a typical example of middle-marking languages (cf. Inglese, 2021). Besides, the construction *voix pronominale* is also sometimes analyzed as an unprototypical passive (Kanta 2015).

Sie in German can be equivalents of fr. *vous*, there is a principle for choosing the right word in each specific context. If *vous* is used to refer to more than one hearer, it is translated as *ihr*. However, if this plural personal pronoun is used to express politeness, then its equivalent in German is *Sie*, which is derived from the third person plural form *sie* (they) and can refer to both a single person or multiple people. The difference between these two pronouns is marked by the orthography, while they share the same conjugation pattern. The expected readers of the book *Le petit prince* are children, and *vous* in most contexts were thus translated with *ihr*. However, in the story, the Little Prince traveled to different planets and talked to many adults, so the variety of conversations with or without polite forms emerged.

- (7) *je **vous** demande pardon de **vous** interroger.* ('I beg your pardon to ask you', O-569)
*ich bitte, verzeiht mir, dass ich **Euch** frage ...* ('I ask, forgive me that I ask you', GL & JL-569)
*gestattet mir **Euch** eine Frage zu stellen ...* ('allow me to ask you a question', HE-569)
*dürfte ich **Euch** vielleicht eine Frage stellen? ...* ('might I perhaps ask you a question?', WS-569)
*Verzeihen **Sie** bitte, Majestät, dass ich **Sie** frage ...*
('Please forgive me, Majesty, that I ask you', HME-569)
*ich bitte um Verzeihung, **Sie** zu fragen ...* ('I beg your pardon to ask you', PS-569)
*bitte verzeihen **Sie** die Frage ...* ('Please excuse the question', UB-569)

In Chapter 10, as the Little Prince met the King, both variants of *ihr* (2nd person, plural-nominative) as well as its accusative form *euch* (-2nd person, plural-accusative) and *Sie* (you-3rd person, plural-accusative) were used to translate *vous* as illustrated in Example (7). The appearance of *Euch* in this context may be interpreted as older and stricter to the original, and was also marked with capitalization. The use of capitalized *Euch* also appeared only in the Little Prince's conversation with the King.

The use of the second-person plural pronoun to express politeness can still be found in some German dialects, while this is not applicable in the present day. On the contrary, the use of *ihr* as a polite form is reduced in other cases. In the conversation with the geographer, with the utterance *Mais **vous** êtes géographe !* ('But you [2nd person, plural] are a geographer!', O-912,) this second plural pronoun was used only in two versions (Ü_GL & JL-912; Ü_WS-912).

Remarkably, the variation of the translated *vous* in German showed a certain inconsistency, as in the question the Little Prince asked when he first saw the geographer, *Que faites-vous ici ?* ('What are you doing here?', O-895,), the use of *ihr* appeared only in one single translated version (Ü_WS-895). In contrast, in his conversation with the businessman, i.e., the first utterance *Votre cigarette est éteinte* ('Your cigarette is out!', O-700,), *votre* (possessive form of *vous*) was translated with *Ihre* ('your'), the possessive pronoun of the polite form *Sie* across all versions.

While the indefinite pronoun *on* ('one') was mostly translated into German as *man* ('one') and the impersonal subjects *il* as *es*, a variation was found in many cases. The impersonal pronoun *il* in its role as a dummy subject, which mostly refers to natural phenomena like *es* in German, is converted into a human agent, i.e., human action, using the German indefinite pronoun *man* to perform this role. Moreover, since *man* in German does have many functions and can

have any personal pronouns as equivalents in some specific contexts (Attaviriyapap, 2012), the translation of impersonal constructions with fr. *il* also showed a variety.

(8) *Il faudrait les mettre les uns sur les autres.*

(‘It would be necessary to put them one on the top of the other’, O-264)

Man müsste sie übereinander stellen ...

(‘They would have to be stacked on top of each other’, Ü_GL & JL-264; Ü_HE-264)

Da müsste man eben einen auf den anderen stellen ...

(‘There one should just put one on top of the other’ Ü_WS-264)

Vielleicht, wenn man sie übereinanderstapeln würde ...

(‘Perhaps, if one would stack them on top of each other’, Ü_HME-264)

Vielleicht doch – wenn man sie übereinanderstellt ...

(Perhaps so – if one stacks them on top of each other. Ü_UB-264)

Ich musste sie aufeinander stapeln ... (‘I had to stack them on top of each other’, Ü_PS-264)

In case of the original sentence in Example (8) *Il faudrait les mettre les uns sur les autres...* (‘impersonal pronoun + need-conditional + direct object pronoun + put + the + ones + on + the + others’), the French impersonal pronoun *il* was translated as a human action, mostly with *man* (‘one’) and in one version even with *ich* (‘I’), although it would also be possible to use a similar construction in German *Es wäre notwendig, sie übereinander zu legen* (‘It-impersonal pronoun’ + be-subjunctive II + necessary + they-3rd person, plural, accusative + one above the other + to + put’). Another example was found in *Mais il faut attendre...* (‘It is necessary to wait’, O-313) where the subject *il* was changed in German to *man* (‘one’, Ü_GL & JL-313), *wir* (‘we’, Ü_PS-313; Ü_HE-313; Ü_WS-313; Ü_UB-313) or even rephrased as *das kann dauern* (‘This can take time’, Ü_HME-323). In the impersonal construction *Il faut être très patient, répondit le renard* (‘It’s necessary to be patient, replied the fox’, O-1212;), the diversity of equivalent pronouns for *il* is even more pronounced with the use of *du* (‘you-2nd person, singular’, Ü_GL & JL-1212; Ü_PS-1211; Ü_WS-1212) *es* (‘it-3rd person, singular’, Ü_HME-1212; Ü_UB-1212), and *man* (‘one’, Ü_HE-1212) in the German translations.

Variations in terms of structure

While the grammatical categories belong to the morphosyntax of the German language, the variations found in the previous section overlap with the structures of utterances. In this study, structural variation was analyzed in three areas reflecting the distinctive features of the German language from a typological perspective: (i) the variation between full verbs and light verb constructions; (ii) the use of different phrase types as adverbials; and (iii) the varieties of word order.

Variation between full verbs and light verb constructions with an NP or PP

In German grammar, full or main verbs usually function independently as the predicate. However, light verb constructions that convey meaning through the nominal or prepositional phrase rather than the verb are also common. The *Funktionsverbgefüge*, or the light verb construction in German, occurs when a verb has very little meaning on its own and cannot

form a predicate alone. Apart from using synonyms to translate the same proposition, the variation between the use of main verbs and the use of light verb constructions as predicates was found in the corpus. For example, the verb *répondit* ('answer') in the construction, *Mais il ne répondit pas à ma question* ('But he didn't answer my question', O-1345), was mostly translated as *antworten* ('answer'), but in one translation, *Antwort geben* ('give answer', Ü_HME-1345) appeared. This kind of variation also exists in other languages, including the source language, French. It is observable that in most cases, the translators kept a similar structure to the original, provided that such formal equivalents exist in German. However, this did cause structural variation every now and then. The variation between the use of main verb and another construction was also observed with idioms, and could be found in a reverse relationship, i.e., more complex constructions in French were translated with a single main verb, as shown in Example (9) with *se mettre en marche* ('to put oneself on the move'), a reflexive verb followed by a prepositional phrase. In four versions of the German translation, it was translated with the German literal equivalent phrase *sich auf den Weg machen* ('make oneself on the way'). However, two translators chose the main verb *losgehen* ('start/set off'), a separable verb, to translate the same situation.

- (9) *Cependant nous nous mîmes en marche.* ('However, we put ourselves on the move'. O-1339)
Dennoch machten wir uns auf dem Weg
(‘Nevertheless, we put ourselves on the way’. Ü_GL&JL-1339; Ü_PS-1339; Ü_HE-1339)
...machten wir uns auf den Weg ('we put ourselves on the way'. Ü_HME-1339)
Dennoch gingen wir los ('We set off'. Ü_WS-1339)
Und doch gingen wir los ('And nevertheless, we set off'. Ü_UB-1339)

The use of different phrase structures as adverbials

In this section, the use of different phrase structures refers to the variation in transferring the meaning of the adverbial or object through various structures. In German, an adverbial can be expressed through various phrase structures (i.e., adverb phrase, prepositional phrase, nominal phrase, or subordinate clause). In the corpus, this type of variation also occurred. Both similar and different phrase structures were found in the translations to express the same adverbial in the original. For example, *la nuit* (the night/in the night, O-159,) a nominal phrase in French, was translated in the form of an adverb or adverb phrase *nachts* ('at night') in four versions, but in one version, it was translated with the nominal phrases in the genitive case *des Nachts* ('of the night', Ü_HE-159) and in another version, the subordinate clause *wenn es dunkel wird* ('when it gets dark', Ü_HME-159) was used to transfer the same temporal meaning. In the sentence *J'éteignais le matin et j'allumais le soir* ('I turned off in the morning and turned on in the evening', O-839;), *le matin* and *le soir*, which are both noun phrases in the original version⁷, were translated with prepositional phrases *am Morgen* ('in the morning') and *am Abend* ('in the evening') in 4 versions (Ü_GL&JL -839; Ü_HME-839;

⁷ It should be noted that though temporal adverbials in French such as *la nuit*, *le matin*, and *le soir* appear to be noun phrases on the surface, in their function as adverbials, they are not always categorized as a noun phrase like case adverbials in German. They can be considered special cases of *préposition zéro temporelle* or zero prepositions (Mel'cuk, 2018), while in German, such an interpretation is not common, and the distinction between nominal phrases (NPs) and prepositional phrases (PPs) as adverbials is clearer.

Ü_PS-839; Ü_HE-839) and with the adverbs, *morgens* ('in the morning') and *abends* ('in the evening') respectively, in two versions (Ü_WS-839; Ü_UB-839).

Word order variation

It seems obvious that the analyzed German translations differ in word order variation. Since both German and French are SVO languages, we may assume that they share the same word order. At first glance, the word order can vary between "similar to the original text" and "different from the original text". However, the word order of constituents in each token itself can also vary, as illustrated in the following examples.

- (10) *Je t'attends ici.* ('I'm waiting for you here', O-1468)
Ich warte hier auf dich ('I'm waiting here for you', Ü_HME-1069; Ü_PS-1069; Ü_HE-1069; Ü_WS-1069)
Ich erwarte dich hier ('I'm awaiting for your here', Ü_GL&JL-1069; Ü_UB-1069))
- (11) *Il en existe, je crois, six ou sept.* ('There are, I believe, six or even seven', O-1069)
Es gibt, glaube ich, sechs oder sieben
('There are, I believe, six or seven', Ü_GL&JL-1069; Ü_UB-1069)
Es gibt sie, glaube ich, es sind sechs oder sieben.
('They are there, I believe, there are six or seven', Ü_PS-1069)
Ich glaube, es gibt sechs oder sieben. ('I believe, there are six or seven', Ü_WS-1069)
Ich glaube, von denen gibt es ungefähr sechs oder sieben
('I believe, of those, there are about six or seven', Ü_HME-1069)
Davon gibt es sechs oder sieben, glaube ich.
('Of that, there are six or seven, I believe', Ü_HE-1069)

Example (10) shows not only the variation of word order, but also a valency variation resulting in different lengths that can also influence the word order in German. While the first translated version placed the direct object before the local adverbial, the second version used the reverse order which is possible only through a change of the verb and its necessary valency. The original verb *attendre* ('to wait for') can be literally translated as *warten* ('to wait') in German, which requires the structure of this verb to be followed by a prepositional object led by the preposition *auf*, comparable with *for* in the expression *to wait for* in English. However, it is also possible to use the verb *erwarten* ('await'), which shows the same valency as the original in French. The object *tu* ('you') was thus translated as *dich* ('you') in German which is a noun phrase and has to come before the local adverbial according to the word order rule in German.

Variation was also found with an element that can be moved freely or even removed without affecting the core structure, since it functions as *a parenthetical insertion*. In Example (11), a complete variation in word order was apparent. These three variations are also possible in French as *Je crois, il en existe six ou sept* and *Il en existe six ou sept, je crois*. Since two German translators added another element to the sentence ('they', 'of those', 'of that'), a total of five different translated versions was identified.

Key characteristics of German reflected through variations across translations

This section presents key characteristics of German found in the analyzed translations from a structural-linguistics perspective. The analysis used a typological approach (cf. Hentschel, 2023) and was further discussed in alignment with the results in previous sections, which focused on grammatical information bundled in inflection and word order. Based on the analysis of the six German-translated versions, a number of key characteristics of the German language were highlighted through variations, appearing both among the translations themselves, and between them and the French original. Three chosen aspects can be considered key characteristics in the following discussion: (i) different lengths; (ii) variation of addition and omission; and (iii) topicalization.

Different lengths

This aspect may be considered irrelevant to the original language, since no translation uses the method of word-by-word glossing. It is also not possible to definitely categorize translations with the nearest possible word counts adhering to the original. However, it is remarkable how the word counts of each German translation vary to show an aspect of diversity. According to the word count through the Word program, the total number of words varies between 14,170 and 15,847 words⁸ as displayed in Table 2 below.

Table 2
Different word numbers in the analyzed German translations

Peter Stamm	Hannelore Eisenhofer	Grete & Josef Leitgeb	Ulrich Bossier	Walter Sauer	Hans Magnus Enzenberger
14,170	14,382	14,682	14,871	14,912	15,847

Compared to the number of words in the original version used for this study, which contains only 14,838 words, it is obvious that all of the translations contain more words, especially considering the French orthography in the original file, where some punctuations, e.g., question or exclamation marks were typed with spacings, inflating the actual word count by a slight margin. The wide range of 677 words in total across all six German translations is inevitably caused by variations in vocabulary, grammatical categories, and structural variation, as shown and discussed in the prior sections. This finding also confirms that in German, it is possible to use either shorter or longer utterances to express the same meaning and highlights what has been one of the important competence aspects in the old tradition of German teaching called *Umformung* which means ‘transformation’, ‘rephrasing’ or ‘rewriting’. For instance, *wegen der Hitze* (‘because of the heat’) containing 3 words can be rephrased into a 4-word subordinated clause, *weil es heiß ist* (‘because it is hot’).

Addition and omission

There are two generally preferred translation techniques that deal with addition and omission. Thus, they also contribute to the variations found in the analyzed German translations. The

⁸ The chapter number was excluded from the word counting.

analysis, however, did not use a quantitative approach but aimed to illustrate noteworthy instances of words or constructions that were added or omitted across the translated versions. The purpose behind the addition of certain words or elements in the translation is mostly to provide more information or better facilitate the reader's understanding of the target language and culture, while in the inverse direction, omission is mostly done to reduce the amount of unnecessary information if the content can already be understood without it. There are four categories in total dealing with addition and omission that will be presented and discussed here.

The first group concerns the subject and object of certain sentences. As already mentioned in the methodology, a lot of tokens were not counted separately since several utterances were just linked further through commas. The addition of subjects mostly referred to cases where translators would sometimes split these utterances into several complete sentences. On the other hand, when it was clear in the context who the subject of the sentence is, the subject may be omitted in the translation, and utterances may be combined. This is also applicable in the case of the object. If it is grammatically correct, and the object is already known before, it may be omitted; however, the omission must not violate grammatical rules or verb valency restrictions.

The second group covers conjunctions such as *und* ('and') and *aber* ('but'), which are the literal translations of French *et* ('and') and *mais* ('but'). They were either omitted or added, especially when two clauses were combined instead of beginning a new sentence. In some cases, not only *und* was added, but also a whole sentence was added to express the situation more clearly, as seen in Examples (12) and (13) below.

- (12) ***Mais je n'étais pas rassuré.*** ('But I was not reassured', O-1470])
Ich war nicht beruhigt. ('I was not reassured', Ü_PS-1470)
- (13) *Je ne voulais pas qu'il fit un effort :.* ('I didn't want him to make an effort', O-1398)
Ich wollte nicht, dass er sich anstrengt, und sagte ihm:
 ('I didn't want that he makes an effort **and told him**', Ü_HME-1398)
Ich wollte nicht, dass er sich zu sehr anstrengt, und sagte zu ihm:
 ('I didn't want that he makes too much effort **and told him**', Ü_WS-1398)

The third group deals with the translation of the so-called cleft sentences beginning in French with *c'est ...*, *que ...*, e.g., *C'est ici que le petit prince a apparu sur terre, puis disparu* ('This is here where the little prince appeared on earth, then disappeared', O-1694). This was translated with the exact equivalent cleft in German in some cases, e.g., *Es ist hier, dass der kleine Prinz auf der Erde erschien und dann verschwand* ('it-impersonal pronoun + is + here + that + the + little + prince + on + the + earth + appeared + and + then + disappeared'). Remarkably, no single translator used this possibility. All of them began the sentence with the topicalization of *ici*, i.e., with the German word *hier* ('here').

The last group concerns omission in particular, not addition. It deals with the *dislocation à gauche* (left-dislocation), e.g., *Moi je m'assis parce que je ne pouvais plus me tenir debout*

(‘Me, I sat down because I could no longer stand’, O-1646) and *dislocation à droite* (right-dislocation), e.g., *Tu auras, toi, des étoiles qui savent rire !* (‘You will, you, will have stars that know how to laugh’, O-1573), which are quite commonly used in French to denote emphasis, contrast or topicalization in spoken discourse.

(14) **Moi**, je suis bien content d’avoir eu un ami renard...

(‘Me, I am very happy to have a fox friend’, O-1330)

Ich bin froh, dass ich einen Fuchs zum Freunde hatte ...

(‘I am glad that I had a fox to be a friend’, Ü_GL & JL-1330)

Ich bin sehr glücklich, den Fuchs als Freund zu haben ...

(‘I am very happy to have a fox as a friend’, Ü_PS-1330)

Ich bin froh, dass ich einen Fuchs als Freund hatte ...“

(I am glad that I had a fox as friend’, Ü_PS-1330)

Ich, ich bin froh, dass ich einen Fuchs zum Freund gehabt habe ...

(‘Me, I am glad that I had a fox to be a friend’, Ü_PS-1330)

*Ich **jedenfalls** bin froh, dass ich einen Fuchs zum Freund hatte ...*

(‘I, anyway, am glad that I had a fox to be a friend’, Ü_HME-1330; Ü_UB-1330)

It is understandable to repeat the subject pronoun as in the original, however, the literal equivalents as *Ich, ich...* (‘I, I...’) is not quite natural in German. Thus, these pronouns were mostly omitted in the translations. In the corpus, both left- and right-dislocations were omitted in the German versions, while at times, it was expressed through other types of words as illustrated in Example (14). The equivalents of *moi* disappeared in three versions of the German translation. In two of them, the word *jedenfalls* was added to function as a focus particle in order to emphasize the subject *ich* (‘I’) and thus, can be considered a German equivalent of *moi* (‘me’) in this sentence. The case of left-dislocation omission especially overlaps with the last key characteristic to be presented in the next section: topicalization.

Topicalization

Topicalization, like word order, is another area where French and German are quite different, even though they share the same typological feature as SVO languages. In every language, not all sentences have to begin with the subject, but a word or phrase that can be moved to the beginning of the sentence to function as the sentence’s topic before new information follows.

Despite the exclusion of a quantitative evaluation, it is apparent that several translated sentences share the same topic with the original French version, and a large number of tokens in *Le Petit Prince* begin with the subject of the sentence; however, only a part of them were translated with the same sentence topics. Even though the same topics can be found in the German translation (e.g., the translated sentence *Je ne voyais ni n’entendais toujours personne* (‘I still didn’t see or hear anyone’, O-1483) begins with *ich* or engl. *I*), another element was shifted to be the sentence topic instead. Another possibility was that the role assignment was changed from agent to receiver instead, resulting in the sentence subject change. Remarkably, if some information was topicalized, which was quite seldom in the

French original, there was no variation in word order in the German translations, since the topic was identical in all analyzed versions (original and 6 German versions). Examples (15), (16), and (17) below show the various possibilities of the topicalization in the same context in comparison to the preservation of the topicalized element if an adverbial, not the subject, should function as the topic.

- (15) *J'aurai bien plus peur ce soir...* ('I will be much more scared tonight', O-1530)
Ich werde heute Abend noch viel mehr Angst haben ...
 ('I will even be much more scared this evening', Ü_GL&JL-1530; Ü_HE-1530) [Topic – I]
Heute Abend werde ich noch viel mehr Angst haben ... ('This evening, I will even be much more scared', Ü_HME-1530; UB-1530) [Topic – this evening]
Heute Abend habe ich dann noch viel mehr Angst ...
 ('This evening, I will then even be more scared' Ü_WS-1530) [Topic – this evening]
Heute Nacht werde ich viel größere Angst haben ...
 ('Tonight, I will be much more scared' Ü_PS-1530) [Topic - tonight]
- (16) *Elles ont toujours besoin d'explications.* ('They always need explanations', O-30)
Sie brauchen ja immer Erklärungen.
 ('They always need explanations', Ü_GL&JL-30) [Topic-they]
Sie benötigten aber immer noch Erklärungen.
 ('But they always still need explanations', Ü_HE-30) [Topic-they]
Den Erwachsenen muss man immer alles erklären.
 ('The adults, one has to explain them everything', Ü_HME-30) [Topic-the adults]
Man muss ihnen immer alles erklären. (Ü_PS-30)
 ('One always has to explain them everything') [Topic-one]
Man muss ihnen immer Erklärungen liefern.
 ('One must always give them explanations') [Topic-one]
- (17) – *Cette nuit, ça fera un an.* ('This night, it will be a year', O-1536) [Topic – this night]
Diese Nacht wird es ein Jahr.
 (This night, it will be one year, Ü_JL&GL-1536; Ü_PS-1536;) [Topic – this night]
Heute Nacht wird es ein Jahr. (Tonight, it will be one year, Ü_HME-1536; Ü_HE-1536; Ü_WS-1536; Ü_UB-1536) [Topic – tonight]

Overall, the variations in the form of topicalization mechanisms illustrate the most important aspect in the syntactic and information structure of German itself, and in contrast to French as its counterpart in the present study.

CONCLUSION

The present research is the first study comparing and analyzing six different German translations from a linguistic perspective. Although there are some prior studies, in most cases, only a specific linguistic aspect was analyzed as seen in the cases of Fejkiel et al. (2023), Korcz and Szymańska (2023), Nujić (2024), Roßmann (2019) and Tamura (2009, 2019). The descriptive method, which covers a broad overview of lexical, grammatical and syntactic features has never been used. Moreover, no research has ever used the same corpus as the

analyzed corpus here—a self-compiled parallel corpus—since in most cases, the first version translated by Grete and Josef Leitgeb was always used (e.g., Feijkiel et al. 2023; Korcz & Szymańska, 2023; Roßmann, 2019; Tamura, 2009, 2019), while versions translated by some other translators are sporadically found, such as the versions translated by Alexander Varell (Ahn, 2021) and Romy Strassenburg (Nujić, 2024).

The study on the widespread phenomenon of retranslation of world-famous books often referred to the Retranslation Hypothesis of Berman (1990, as cited in Sanatifar & Etemadi, 2021), which usually focused on language and cultural aspects, when a literary work was retranslated. Although this was not the main research framework of the present study, the results are relevant and can also contribute to the discussion from a linguistic perspective. It seems obvious that this hypothesis cannot be applied to the huge amount of *Le petit prince* translations in German. In the corpus of the present research, Grete and Josef Leitgeb's translation seemed relatively close to the source text in various aspects while the version translated by Hans Magnus Enzenberger, which was published for the first time about 65 years later, not only often provided a single variant different from the other five analyzed versions, but also the least strictness to the original, both in terms of word choice and structural variations. This notion can also be supported by two quantitative data points, the nearest word number to the original as previously shown in Table 1 and the number of similar first-sentence elements in French and German tokens⁹. The results of the present research thus show the other direction compared to Sanatifa and Etemadi's (2021) testing of the Retranslation Hypothesis with Persian re-translations.

While the lexical variation found in the present research can be considered common, the variation of the German translations regarding the grammatical categories in terms of numbers, tenses, moods, voices, and pronouns shows that despite the similarities between the source and target language, both as inflecting SVO languages, translators are not constrained to use the same grammatical features in translation. On the contrary, German translators seem to play with the possibilities of using various grammatical devices to serve their translation purpose, which is not a word-by-word transfer or exact grammatical equivalence. In terms of syntactic structures, the three important features found in the corpus highlight the form or morphosyntactic richness of the German language itself.

The variation of syntactic structures, especially in word order, supports the resulting key characteristics of German reflected in the translations of *Le petit prince*. While different lengths and the variation of addition and omission can be interpreted as idiosyncratic choices based on the translators' individual styles, the omission of various French words or structures and the topicalization that occurs in specific constructions confirm the most important and salient difference between French and German: the information structure. While French has a rigid SVO word order and uses either the left-dislocation and cleft sentences to focus key elements rather than the topicalization, German has a more flexible word order and always

⁹ Referring to the word order variation in the answer to the first research question and the topicalization in the finding in accordance to the second research question, the first sentence element in each token of all the six translations was categorized into "same as" or "different from" the original sentence elements and counted. The results showed the following order of tokens similar to the French original: Grete and Josef Leitgeb (1,490); Hannelore Eisenhofer (1,470); Walter Sauer (1,360); Peter Stamm (1,295); Ulrich Bossier (1,247); Enzenberger (780).

puts the focus in the first position, which is coined *Vorfeld* ('prefield'), referring to the position before the finite verb. Additionally, in German, as a V2 language¹⁰, only one constituent—the topicalized element—is allowed in this position, making the fronted position highly effective for focusing or highlighting the sentence topic, so that the other devices, such as cleft sentences and left- or right-dislocations, are rarely used. This contradicts the French structure, which naturally prefers these two devices and neglects the topicalization. Therefore, there are some aspects which should be further explored. The distribution of these three devices can be studied quantitatively, with other corpora, and especially from a contrastive or typological approach by using corpora of various languages. The result of the present study also confirms that the topicalization mechanism in German is grammatically fixed and should be practiced more in the teaching and learning process of German as a Foreign Language (GFL).

The present study still has limitations. First, the whole corpus-based analysis was done manually and provides only a linguistic reflection rather than findings that are empirical in nature. Second, there are no prior studies dealing with all three linguistic levels (lexical, grammatical, syntactic) across multiple German translations. For a German-speaking audience, the retranslation has generally been discussed in terms of translation styles and readership or literary interpretations raised by journalists or book reviewers, not from a linguistic perspective (e.g., in newspaper articles; see Hanimann, 2015 and Sulner, 2015). The approach used in these articles is also rather hermeneutic and is neither based on linguistic analyses nor supported by academic research. Thus, the present research should be considered a pilot project on the comparison of different German-translated versions conducted to explore the linguistic variation of the translations, especially because only a few grammatical aspects were explored prior to this study. Moreover, a structural approach used in contrastive linguistics was used to describe the variation in terms of differences among translations of the same target language and also in contrast to the source language. Further research could consider using the model of Rounthieera and Supanfai (2024) to not only exact a quantitative analysis, but also expand the corpus to cover more than only two translations and focus more on lexical, grammatical and syntactic aspects in order to produce findings directly useful for the teaching of German as a Foreign Language and for translation practice.

The findings, especially with regards to syntactic variations, can be further researched to contribute to the contrastive studies of French and German as well as typological studies. One possible and interesting research topic would be to investigate the linguistic phenomenon behind the French reflexive and reciprocal *se*, which also share similar features of the middle voice with the German equivalents of Medium ('middle voice'). With regards to the information structure, topicalization and the left-cleft in French, as already thematized by Gregory and Michalis (2001), can also be more deeply explored by being contrasted with German as a V2 language. Furthermore, the listing of these characteristics with concrete examples from the German version of *Le petit prince* (*Der kleine Prinz*) can be used as teaching materials in the field of GFL. The grammatical and structural variation found in the corpus can serve as concrete examples to teach GFL learners how to paraphrase the same content with different grammatical and syntactical mechanisms. It is also worth mentioning that the vocabulary of

¹⁰ A V2 or verb-second language refers to a language where the finite verb must be the second constituent in a declarative main clause, regardless of what element come first.

the translations of *Le petit prince*, no matter the target language, with or without variations, could also serve as an interesting glossary for foreign language learners, especially when the translation in their mother tongue is also provided.

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